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A HISTORY OF THE NANSEMOND RIVER, VIRGINIA

A Thesis

Presented to

the Department of History

University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

by

Peter Roland Neal

June 1959

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VIRGINIA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. P. M. Burton of Suffolk, Va., who suggested this topic to me, and helped me to find some of the material used in this paper. Also the help of the late Wilber E. Mac Clenny, whose works, both directly and indirectly, have given me much information, must be acknowledged.

My thinks also go to Miss Linda Veatch of Westhampton College, who read over my paper and provided figure three for me, and to my typist, Mrs. R. E. Brennan, of Richmond.

I hope this paper will act as a reminder to all of the part that the rivers of Virginia have played in the history of this great commonwealth. Perhaps it will give others the incentive to study and write about the other rivers of Virginia.

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CHAPTER I

A DESCRIPTION

> The northern branch of the Nansemond abounds in scenery of the most picturesque and romantic description, and is well deserving the attention of Nature's admirers. The stream is of fresh water, winding some three or four miles in a northwesterly direction from Suffolk, and its average width is about fifty feet. In ascending its intricate windings, you are surprised at the different aspects presented to view. In some instances, the tall and majestic junipers are entirely submerged at the base, and, as you proceed, an elevation will suddenly appear, as if by magic, rising perpendicularly from the river at least twenty feet, rendering the contrast at once startling and delightful.[1]

Thus was the Nansemond River, found in Nansemond County, Virginia, described over a hundred years ago. It is fitting to start this paper with such a description, but more is needed.

I. LOCATION AND FORMATION

Location. The Nansemond River is a tidal stream which lies entirely within Nansemond County, Virginia. It rises in the county, flows northerly twenty-five miles and

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[1] William S. Forrest, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853), p. 481.

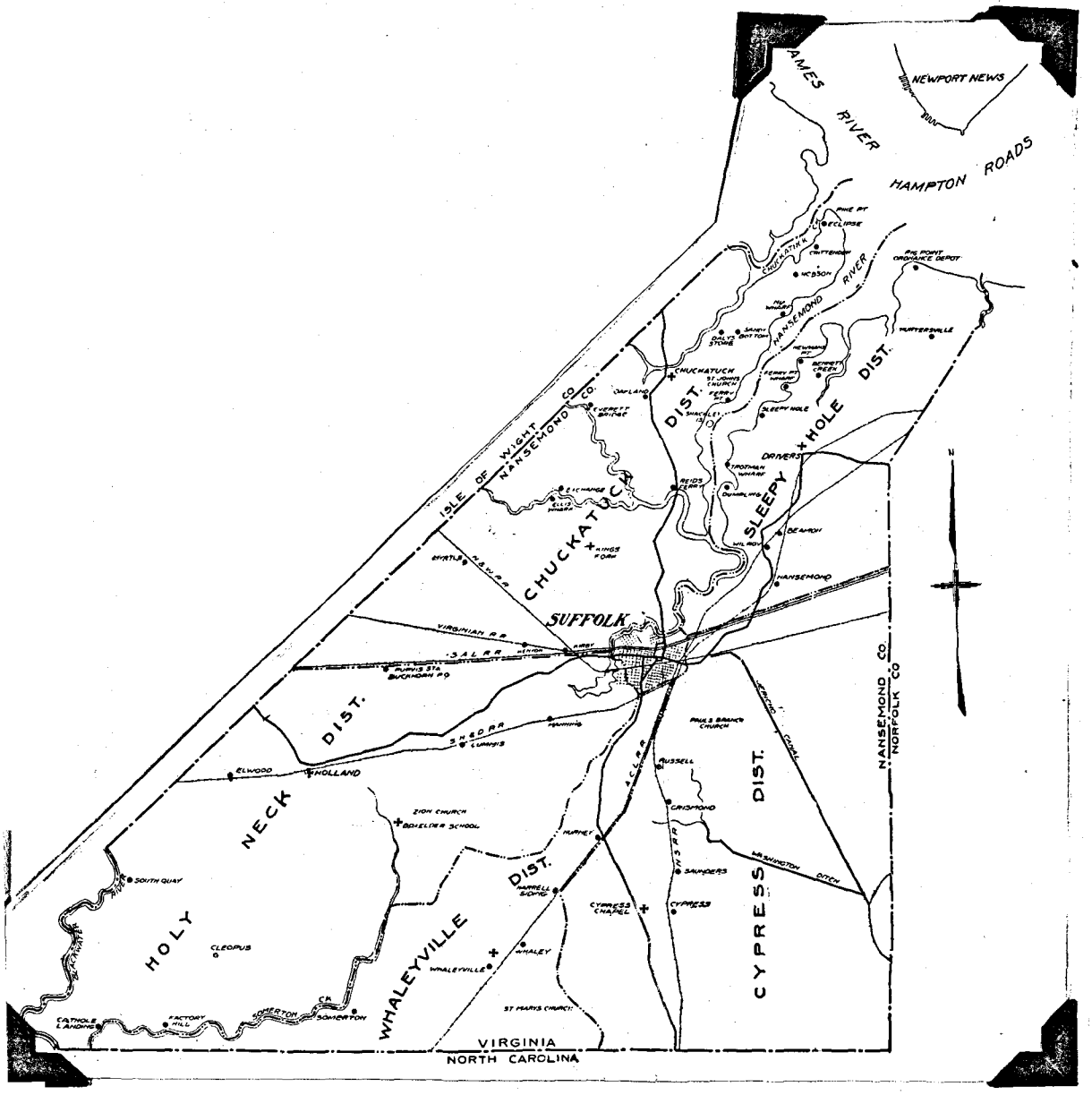

FIGURE 1

NANSEMOND COUNTY, VIRGINIA

empties into the James River immediately above the mouth of the latter stream in Hampton Roads.[2]

Formation. The river is formed by the junction of Smiths and Cahoons Creek nineteen miles above the mouth. This is the head of navigation for boat traffic, and navigation of the river is practicable throughout the year.[3]

II. WIDTH, DEPTH, AND TIDES

Width and depth. In its original condition, the Nansemond was navigable to Suffolk by boats drawing five feet at mean low water.[4] However the federal government has worked on the river and changed it to a considerable degree.

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[2] Department of the army, Report Upon the Improvement of Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk, Va., District, being an extract from the annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1952 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 434. Hereafter referred to as Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952.

[3] Ibid., p. 435.

[4] United States Congress, Letter From the Secretary of War Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., House of Representatives Document No. 395, 61st Congress, 2d Session, p. 2. Hereafter referred to as House Document 395.

The river can be roughly divided into three sections. The first section lies above the highway bridge at Suffolk, the latter being about eighteen and one half miles from the mouth; the second section lies between the highway bridge and Western Branch; the third section lies between Western Branch and the mouth of the river. In the first section, the channel is narrow and has one abrupt reverse bend. The usable depth at mean low water is about eight feet.[5] From the highway bridge to Western Branch, the river has a usable channel of twelve feet deep at mean low water and one hundred feet wide, with a turning basin at Suffolk two hundred feet square.[6] There is a bend development of about 180 per cent in this section.[7] Below the Branch, the river has a usable channel of one hundred feet wide and twelve feet deep at mean low water up to Town Point.[8] The average bank width (the usable channel being not as wide) above the Branch to Suffolk is about two hundred feet, and from the Branch to

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[5] United States Congress, Letter From the Secretary of War Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., House of Representatives Document No. 184, 70th Congress, 1st Session, p. 6. Hereafter referred to as House Document 184.

[6] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit., p. 434.

[7] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 6.

[8] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit.

the mouth of the river it gradually widens, attaining a width of two miles at the mouth.[9]

Tides. The river is a tidal river, as has been said. The mean tidal range at Suffolk under ordinary conditions is 3.4 feet, and at Newman's Point, 2.8 feet. The extreme range at Suffolk is 2.8 feet to four feet and at Newman's Point, 2.3 feet to 3.3 feet.[10]

The controlling depth of the river at mean low water, as ascertained in July of 1951, was twelve feet.[11] There has been no survey since that time, and it is now estimated that the controlling depth of the river is approximately ten feet at mean low water.[12]

III. TERMINAL FACILITIES AND BRIDGES

Terminal facilities. There are two wooden wharves and about 950 feet of wooden bulkhead at Suffolk, and a wooden wharf and about 550 feet of wooden bulkhead located about nine miles downstream from Suffolk. All of these facilities

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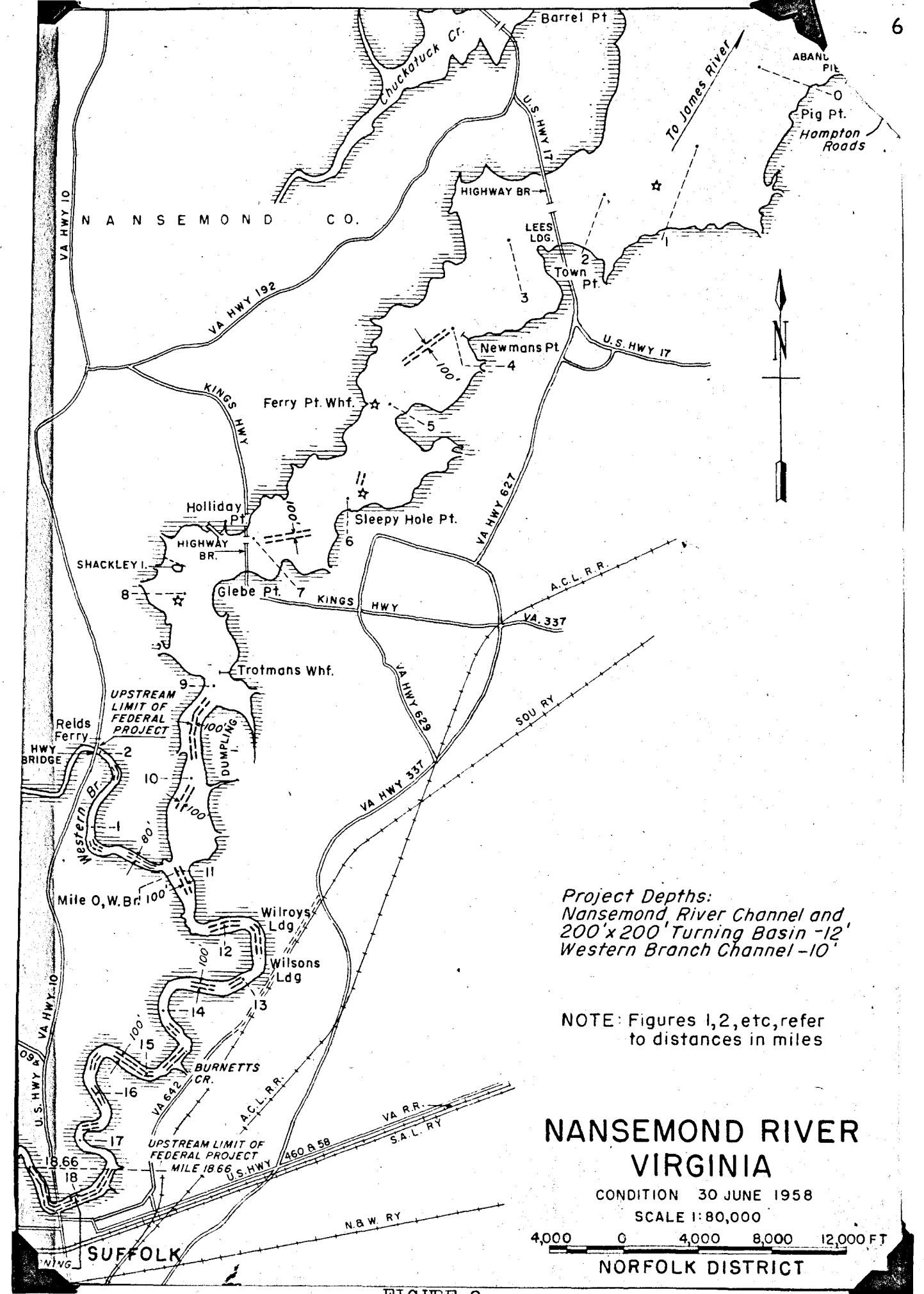
[9] House Document 395, op. cit., p. 3.

[10] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit., p. 434.

[11] Ibid., p. 435.

[12] Letter from C. J. Robin, Chief of the engineering division, U. S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, to the author, February 27, 1959.



Project Depths:
Nansemond River Channel and 200'x200' Turning Basin -12'
Western Branch Channel -10'

NOTE: Figures 1, 2, etc, refer to distances in miles

NANSEMOND RIVER VIRGINIA

CONDITION 30 JUNE 1958

SCALE 1:80,000

4,000 0 4,000 8,000 12,000 FT

NORFOLK DISTRICT

FIGURE 2

NANSEMOND RIVER, VIRGINIA

are privately owned.[13]

Bridges. There are three bridges that cross the Nansemond. One is situated at Suffolk on U. S. Highway 460. Another crosses between Glebe Point and Holliday Point, and the third crosses at Town Point on U. S. Highway 17. The last two are toll bridges, the latter being a part of the James River Bridge System.[14]

IV. BRANCHES OF THE NANSEMOND

Bennetts Creek. There are two main branches of the Nansemond, Bennetts Creek and Western Branch. Bennetts Creek enters the Nansemond just below Town Point, about three miles from the mouth of the river. It is a very narrow stream and navigable for about four or five miles. In 1909, there were extensive shoals at the mouth of the creek, and they are probably still there, it being considered too expensive to remove them at that time. Many farms line the bank of this creek.[15]

Western Branch. The Western Branch has a length of about eight miles, and flows from its source in Great Swamp

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[13] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit., pp. 434-35.

[14] See Figure 2. The author also has personal knowledge of the bridges, having ridden over all of them.

[15] House Document 395, op. cit., p. 4.

southeasterly. The channel is very narrow and tortuous, having a bend development of about 160 per cent.[16] A channel has been dredged in the Branch from its mouth to Reids Ferry, a distance of about two miles. This channel in March, 1932, had a mean low water depth of ten feet and was eighty feet wide.[17] Since 1932, no maintenance dredging has been done on the Western Branch due to cessation of industrial activity on that branch.[18]

V. LOCALITIES ON THE NANSEMOND

The only city of any size on the Nansemond is Suffolk, which is at the head of navigation and about eighteen and one-half miles from the mouth. There are other small places on the river and its branches, such as Bennett Creek, Sleepy Hole, and Reids Ferry, but none of these are of any size. The population of Suffolk in 1958 was 12,800; the population of Nansemond County was 27,500.[19]

The total drainage area of the Nansemond River is about two hundred square miles, consisting largely of highly cultivated truck farms.[20]

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[16] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 6.

[17] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit., pp. 434-35.

[18] Letter from C. J. Robin to the author, February 27, 1959.

[19] Figures taken from the Suffolk-Nansemond County 350th anniversary festival bulletin, published in Suffolk in 1958, pp. 18-19.

[20] House Document 184, op. cit. p. 5.

CHAPTER II

COLONIAL NANSEMOND

The word "Nansemond" is an old Indian word meaning "fishing-point or angle," and was given by the Indians to a spot where the Western Branch comes into junction with the main stream of the Nansemond.[1] It was the name of the Indian tribe that used to be on its banks, and it is now the name of a river and a county in Virginia. The history of the river extends far beyond the coming of the white man, but it is there that this history will start.

I. THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

John Smith. The Nansemond was first visited by the white man in 1608, when Captain John Smith and twelve men sailed up it on an exploring expedition which set forth on July 24 of that year.[2] Toward the end of this expedition, Smith decided to go and see the people called the "Nandsamunds." When he was around the entrance of the river, he spied several Indians, one of which came into Smith's boat and invited him to come down the river to his house. This house was located

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[1] Joseph B. Dunn, The History of Nansemond County, Virginia (Suffolk: N. P., 1907), p. 14.

[2] John Smith, The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles (Glasgow: James Mac Lehore and Sons 1907), I, 124.

on a small island in the river.[3] They went ashore there, visited the Indian's house, and then went on up the river. They were struck by the amount of corn growing on the island and on the banks of the river. As the party went on up the river, they began to grow suspicious of the Indians. They had good reasons for this, for seven or eight canoes started following them. Suddenly a rain of arrows came from the banks and the canoes. Smith turned around to go back to a wider part of the river. A few musket shots scattered the Indians on shore, and made the Indians in the canoes jump overboard. Smith then gathered up all the canoes and started destroying them. Immediately the Indians made gestures of peace, and agreed to terms laid down by Smith. Soon afterward, Smith and his men departed for Jamestown, arriving there on September 7.[4] Later in the year, a famine was threatening Jamestown, and Smith led a party back to the Nansemond to get the corn which the Indians had promised. But the Indians did not want to give them any corn, so the party resorted to force. After the burning of one house, the Nansemonds agreed to give Smith one half of what they

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[3]This island is today considered to be Dumpling Island, which is not far from the Western Branch. It is so marked by a highway marker on Va. Highway 10 out of Suffolk. Also see Dunn, op. cit., p. 13.

[4]Smith, op. cit., pp. 134-37.

had. They loaded Smith's three boats, and agreed to plant purposely for the colony the next year.[5]

Early settlement. In 1609, a settlement was established on the Nansemond. Captain John Martin, because of unrest in Jamestown, led 120 men to the Nansemond in that year. He did not stay long however, for he unjustly attacked the Indians, captured their chief, and kept him on the little island in his house. The Indians assaulted the place, killed many of Martin's men, and released their king. Shortly afterward, Martin returned to Jamestown.[6]

In 1612, Sir Thomas Dale, with one hundred men, explored the river to its source.[7]

Edward Waters and his wife may have been the first family to settle on the Nansemond. In the great massacre of 1622, they were captured by the Nansemonds and kept as prisoners by them. They escaped when a boat, which some Englishmen had lost in a storm, was cast upon the shores of the Nansemond. The Indians found the boat and rejoiced greatly at their good fortune. However, they became very lax in their celebration, for Waters and his wife managed to get the boat and sail in it to Kecoughtan, which is near Point Comfort.[8]

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[5]Ibid., p. 152

[6]Ibid., p. 190

[7]Dunn, op. cit., pp. 14-15

[8]Smith, op. cit., p. 298.

In the 1630's, settlement around the Nansemond began in earnest. In 1633, John Arvine was granted four hundred acres of land in the county of Warrosquioake on a creek on the southwest side of the Nansemond River.[9] In 1635, William Clarke was granted 250 acres on the south side of the river.[10] In 1636, several grants were made, with William Parker receiving 350 acres on May 31 over against Dumpling Island,[11] Peter Johnson receiving a grant on June 1 on the south side of the river,[12] John Wilkins receiving one on September 9 on the east side of the river,[13] and Thomas Burbage receiving two hundred acres on September 16 on the south side of the river.[14]

In 1633, Lord Matrevers, son of the Duke of Norfolk, received a grant for thirty thousand acres on the Nansemond, and an effort was made to name the river "Matrevers" in his honor. This name did not stick.[15]

By 1637, the region around the Nansemond had become so settled that a county was formed there. It was called

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[9]"Isle of Wight County Records," The William and Mary College Quarterly, Series I, VII (April, 1899), 282.

[10]Ibid., p. 283.

[11]Ibid., p. 286

[12]Ibid., p. 285

[13]Ibid..

[14]Ibid., p. 287

[15]Dunn, op. cit., p. 19.

Upper Norfolk County, and was formed by a split in New Norfolk County which had been formed in 1636 from the territory of Elizabeth City County south of the James River.[16] In 1646, the name of Upper Norfolk County was changed to Nansimum,[17] which is the Nansemond County of today. Dunn says that Upper Norfolk County was formed from Isle of Wight,[18] which had formerly been Warrosquioake,[19] There is some truth in this since all of the grants listed above, except Matrever's, were listed as being in Warrosquioake and are on the Nansemond. Also there was a constant battle between Isle of Wight County and Nansemond over boundaries until 1674.[20] Regardless of this, the fact that a new county was formed so early shows that by 1640 many people had moved to and around the banks of the Nansemond.

The Indians. After the massacre of 1622, steps were taken to put down the Indians in Virginia. George Yearley led an expedition that attacked the Nansemonds and did much damage to them.[21] In 1629, a statute was passed to clear the

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[16]Morgan Poitiaux Robinson, "Virginia Counties: Those Resulting From Virginia Legislation," Bulletin of the Virginia State Library (V. IX, No. 1/3, Jan./July, 1916), p. 85.

[17]William Waller Hening (ed.), The Statutes at Large-Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619 (New York: Rand W. and G. Bartow, 1823), I, 323. Hereafter referred to as Hening's Statutes.

[18]Dunn, op. cit., p. 19.

[19]"Isle of Wight County Records," loc. cit., p. 209.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Smith, op. cit., p. 306.

Indians from the lands of Virginia, and the country was divided into four districts for this purpose. The third division was "the plantation of Warosquoyacke, and those inhabitants to cleare the grounds and lands betweene Hogg Island creeke and Nansamunge river."[22] The Nansemonds slowly dwindled away under these attacks. In 1669, there were only forty-five fighting men left in the tribe, and by 1744 these were so few that they joined with the Nottoway tribe. By 1791, there were less than five Indians in the whole tribe living in the region.[23] A once proud nation, which had both helped and hindered the early colonists, had almost completely vanished in less than two centuries.

The settlement of North Carolina. The people of the Nansemond played a large part in the early settlements of North Carolina. Williamson says that a small party was detached from Jamestown in 1621 to the post that had formerly been settled on the Nansemond, and from there emigration commenced, in a short time, to the waters of Albermarle Sound by way of the Blackwater and Bennett's Creek.[24] The

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[22] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., p. 141.

[23] Dunn, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

[24] Hugh Williamson, The History of North Carolina (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812), I, 78-79.

Virginia legislature, in July of 1653, granted Roger Green of Nansemond, on the behalf of himself and the inhabitants of the Nansemond River, ten thousand acres of land for settlement on the Roanoke River and the land lying upon the south side of the Choan River and its branches.[25] Ashe mentions Green in his book, and the fact that when the permanent settlement of North Carolina began, the settlers came from the Nansemond to the sounds of North Carolina. They settled there because the land was good, and they were still near the Nansemond and the marts of trade on the Chesapeake.[26] In this way, the settlers around the Nansemond played an outstanding part in the early settlement of North Carolina.

II. FERRIES ON THE NANSEMOND

In the early 1700's, ferry service was started across the Nansemond. In August 1702, an act was passed setting up public ferries in Virginia, and one was set up to run from Cofeild Point to Robert Peals near Sleepy Hole on the Nansemond. The price was set at six pence for a man and

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[25] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., pp. 380-81.

[26] Samuel A' Court Ashe, History of North Carolina (Greensboro: Charles L. Van Nappen, 1908), I, 58-59.

one shilling for a man and horse.[27] In 1744, a second ferry was set up near Suffolk. It ran from the lot of Lemeul Riddick adjoining the public wharf in Suffolk across to Samuel Jordan's land. The price was set at four pence for a man or horse.[28] Before this ferry was started at Suffolk, the people had to go around the river, crossing at Jarnigan's bridge, now Cahoon's bridge, at the head of tidewater, and then across the crossing at Lake Kilby or Mount Pleasant.[29] In 1748, a ferry was started which ran from the town of Southampton to the borough of Norfolk, and to Nansemond Town. The price for the trip was seven shillings six pence per man or horse. The other two ferries already mentioned were kept in operation by this act.[30] In 1752, George Waff (or Warf) was ordered by the vestry of the Upper Parish of Nansemond County to keep a ferry from Suffolk wharf to Jordan's Point. This was for the use of the church and vestry, and Waff was to be given twelve hundred pounds of

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[27] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., III, 218-19

[28] Ibid., V, 249-50.

[29] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, special 200th anniversary edition, October 27, 1942, Sec. D. p. 1. Here after referred to as Anniversary Edition.

[30] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., VI, 13-16.

tobacco a year for this.[31] However he was paid fifteen hundred pounds of tobacco in 1754 for the keeping of the ferry one year.[32] He got a substantial increase in salary in the space of two years. In 1753, ferries were established on the two main branches of the Nansemond. One was set up on Bennet's creek from Benjamin Bascombe's to the land of James Buckston. The price for man or horse was four pence. The same act set up a ferry on the Western Branch from Jeremiah Godwin's to the land of James Benn, the price also being four pence for man or horse.[33]

By an act passed in 1764, ministers and parishioners going across the Nansemond on the Suffolk ferry to attend divine services on Sunday and other holy days were to be given a free ride.[34] This act was repealed in 1769.[35] Perhaps too many people were going across the river for free, and then not attending the services. There were "Sunday drivers" in those days too.

Ferries continued to run in colonial days, and served as the principal means for crossing the river.

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[31] Wilmer L. Hall (ed.), The Vestry Book of the Upper Parish, Nansemond County, Virginia, 1743-1793 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1949), p. 87.

[32] Ibid., pp. 95-96

[33] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., VI, 375.

[34] Ibid., VIII, 53.

[35] Ibid., p. 371.

III. TRADE IN COLONIAL DAYS

Early trade. In April of 1653, Robert Brasseur, who owned some land near Suffolk, brought over two Frenchmen, Peter and Reenee Besairdier, who were skilled in making glass beads. These two set up a bead factory near the river, and produced there a good grade of beads. Experts who have found them in this century have pronounced them of a high grade.[36] These beads were probably used in trade with the Indians in the area. This was possibly the first business to be set up on the Nansemond.

In 1680, various trading towns were set up in the various counties of Virginia. Fifty acres of land were bought and store houses built thereon. In Nansemond County, Huff's Point was selected as the site of this town.[37] In 1705, Nansemond Town was set up as a port of entry and clearance in Nansemond County. This act was to take effect in 1708. All goods imported into Virginia had to go to this type of port first. Goods exported had to be cleared at these ports also.[38] As can be seen, by the early 1700's, the Nansemond was playing an important part in the trade of the region.

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[36] Article in the Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, p. 1.

[37] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., II, 471-72.

[38] Ibid., III, 404-15.

Tobacco. Tobacco was the main money crop of the colonies in colonial days, and the region around the Nansemond added to this trade. In the early 1700's, tobacco and other goods were being shipped on the Nansemond. By 1728, there were many tobacco warehouses in the county, and the Nansemond had become a trade center for tobacco between North Carolina, Virginia, and England. There were tobacco warehouses at Sleepy Hole, Wilkerson's, Milner's, and at Constance's, afterwards Suffolk.[39] Milner's, located on the Western Branch, carried on an extensive trade in colonial days, and many of her merchants became quite wealthy. It was burned in the Revolution by the British, and has never been revived to any extent.[40] It cannot be found on modern maps.

In 1735, a petition of the merchants of Norfolk to remove the collector's office from Hampton to Norfolk mentions the trade of the British with the Nansemond. It stated that many ships loaded tobacco and tar there, and that small ships laid up provisions for the West Indies. These merchants wished to move the collector's office to

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[39] R. Moore Williams and John E. Martin, Nansemond County and Suffolk, Virginia; History and Geography (Suffolk: Chamber of Commerce, 1928), p. 5.

[40] W. E. Mac Clenny, "An Outline History of Nansemond County, Virginia," p.33. Photostatic copy belonging to John H. Powell, county clerk of Nansemond County, Va.

Norfolk because more trade was being done in that region than ever before, and the collector's office in Hampton placed a hardship on the trade.[41] No doubt the Nansemond played an important part in that trade, especially in tobacco.

Suffolk. The town of Suffolk was set up by an act of the legislature in May, 1742. The place had been Constance's Warehouse and considerable trade had gone on there. Fifty acres of land was set off for the town, and they were bought from Jethro Sumner at three pounds an acre. John Milner, surveyor of the county, laid the town off.[42] This town has been the only town along the Nansemond to grow and prosper. Many of the other places that were trading centers in the 1700's have long passed from most maps.

Ships and ship building. Many ships that came in and out of the Nansemond were owned by Nansemond men, and some were built on the Nansemond. A good deal of selling of ships was carried on, especially at Suffolk. In July of 1738, a ship belonging to Mr. Theophilus Pugh of Nansemond County arrived in the river from Bristol.[43]

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[41] W. P. Palmer (ed.), Calendar of Virginia State Papers and other Manuscripts, 1652 - 1781; Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond (Richmond: R. F. Walker, Supt. of Public Printing, 1875), I, 221. Hereafter referred to as Calendar of Va. State Papers.

[42] Hening's Statutes, op. cit., V, 199-202. Also see pp. 241-44.

[43] Cerinda W. Evans, Some Notes on Shipbuilding and

In 1746, this same man was mortgaging a large amount of his property to raise some money to pay off a debt. Among this property were two ships, two sloops, and two schooners. This number of vessels was a goodly number for a Virginia man to be owning in those days.[44]

Later in the century, the Virginia Gazette of Williamsburg had many advertisements in it for ships that were being sold on the Nansemond. On March 5, 1767, a ship was advertised that was to be sold at Suffolk on March 24. This was a new ship, and was probably built at Suffolk.[45] On April 23, 1767, a ship was offered for sale by George Walker and John Driver at Suffolk. This had a burthen of about 350 hogsheads of tobacco.[46] The schooner "Windsor" was to be sold at Suffolk in February of 1771. It was a new ship, having made only one voyage, owned by John Driver and John King, and had a burthen of three thousand bushels.[47] In November of 1772, two sloops, both of about forty tons burthen, were to be sold at Suffolk. One of these was brand new, and was probably built at Suffolk.[48] In March of 1775, Samuel Cahoon of Suffolk had a ship of 120 tons for sale.[49]

Shipping in Colonial Virginia (Williamsburg: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957) p. 72, quoting from the Virginia Gazette, July 28, 1738.

[44] Ibid., p. 31 [45] The Virginia Gazette, March 5, 1767.

[46] Ibid., April 23, 1767. [47] Ibid., January 24, 1771.

[48] Ibid., November 19, 1772. [49] Ibid., March 11, 1775.

All of these ads point out the fact that Suffolk was a busy place for the buying, selling, and building of ships just before the Revolution.

In June of 1775, the brigantine "Amelia" was lying in the Nansemond and was for charter to Great Britian or the West Indies.[50] Two months earlier, a group of patriots had fired on British troops in Massachusetts to start the American Revolution. This was to usher in a new era for both America and the Nansemond River.

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[50] Ibid., June 2, 1775.

CHAPTER III

BETWEEN TWO WARS

The period of the Revolution will be left to the next chapter in order that the reader can compare the war-time activity of the Nansemond in the Revolution and Civil War. But the Revolution ushered in a new era for the Nansemond.

I. SHIPS AND TRADE

Suffolk--a port of delivery. Shortly after the ratification of the constitution, Suffolk was made a port of delivery, along with Smithfield, in the district of Norfolk and Portsmouth. For, on July 31, 1789, an act of Congress set up twelve districts, with their ports of entries, in Virginia. There were eleven ports of delivery only in the state. Richmond was also made a port of delivery by this act.[1] A port of delivery is one where imported merchandise can be delivered after the payment of duties in the port of entry of the district, which was Norfolk in the case of Suffolk.

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[1] Richard Peters (ed.), The Public Statutes of the United States of America From the Organization of the Government in 1789, to March 3, 1845 (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1845), I, 33-34. Also see pp. 149 and 634.

Merchandise could go to no other port, after the port of entry, except a port of delivery.[2] An office of Surveyor was also set up in Suffolk by this act. There were many who served in this position, a list of which, with the date of their original commissions, follows: Benjamin Bartlett, March 21, 1791; Thomas Swepson, June 22, 1797; Joseph Prentiss, February 19, 1811; Robert H. Webb, June 28, 1838; Benjamin Riddick, October 1, 1850; Thos. W. G. Allen, June 16, 1851; Thos. J. Kilby, October 28, 1851; Robert H. Webb, June 24, 1853.[3] This office was abolished in 1880, but up till June, 1913, Suffolk was still used as a port of delivery in the Norfolk and Portsmouth district. Then the Customs Service was reorganized, and Suffolk no longer served in this capacity.[4]

Ships and shipping. In the latter part of the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth, such things as lumber, corn, gin, wine, brandy, sugar, coffee, flour, lead, shoes, nails, soap, chinaware, farming tools, oil, and many other things were shipped on the Nansemond. The ship "Salley" entered port (Suffolk) on July 9, 1799, with

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[2] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, special 200th anniversary edition, October 27, 1942, Sec. B, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as Anniversary Edition.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

fifteen kegs of paint and two barrels of oil from Perth Amboy. On September 20, 1801, the "Nancy" came to Suffolk carrying eight tons of stone, one hundred weight of cheese, two felt hats, and twenty bushels of potatoes. On November 30 of the same year, the "Corporal Trim" entered Suffolk with twenty-one articles.[5] These, and others, came into the Nansemond laden with merchandise.

At the same time, many ships were going from Suffolk to other ports. A check of the New York Shipping and Commercial List for the year 1824 shows that eighteen times through the year a ship came into New York City from Suffolk. The schooner "Three Friends" came into the city seven times during this year, and the sloop "Patty" entered four times. These ships were probably engaged in the shingle or lumber trade, more of which will be said later. A check of the List in 1844 shows twenty-three entries from Suffolk. On four days of that year, two ships came in from Suffolk. This list may not always be accurate either. The port of New York was not the only port to which ships from Suffolk went, but it does give an indication of the business Suffolk did with the large northern ports.

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[5] Ibid.

Shingle trade. The shingle trade was a very extensive branch of industry in the early 1800's. About 1795, the Jericho Canal was cut from a point on Lake Drummond to the Nansemond River. Barges, about eight feet wide and up to sixty feet in length, carried juniper logs down the canal, and then they were converted into roof shingles. It is said that as many as three million shingles were made from one year's supply of juniper logs brought down the Jericho Canal.[6] The principal company in this business was the Dismal Swamp Land Company, but there were others that thrived in the business, for there were many good trees in the swamp. Half a dozen large vessels were kept busy at the Suffolk wharves carrying shingles from Suffolk to northern markets.[7] Hundreds of men worked in the swamp, loading logs and boating them to a landing on the Nansemond a few miles below Suffolk. These workers, or "Swampers," spent most of their money in Suffolk, and were a constant source of money for Suffolk merchants.[8]

Lumber trade. By the 1840's, the lumber trade had become a very important business in and around Suffolk.

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[6] Ibid., Sec. K, pp. 4-5.

[7] Edward Pollock, Sketch Book of Suffolk, Va.; Its People and Its Trade (Portsmouth: Fiske and Purdie, 1886), pp. 73-74.

[8] Ibid.

Some eight or ten houses were engaged in the business. For several weeks before Christmas, the carts loaded with lumber would come in and trade with local merchants. It took on the importance of money for many of the farmers in surrounding areas. Liquor was an especial item of trade, and everyone seemed to encourage it. The lumber was later shipped down the Nansemond to markets.[9] Pollock says:

> Even in the "Olden Times," and long before the application of steam power to mechanical purposes, or the invention of machinery - as the word is now understood - Suffolk was famous all over the seaboard states, and at some foreign ports besides, as a depot and manufacturing point for the great product of the forest.

As time grew on, the lumber business died out a bit, and then the railroad helped to pick it back up. The shingle business died out almost entirely before the Civil War, however.[10]

Tars and turpentine were also shipped greatly down the Nansemond in the 1840's and 50's, but fell off and disappeared almost entirely by 1885.[11]

The Jamaica Ice Company. A novel enterprise was undertaken in 1801 by a group of Suffolk men. This was an ill-fated attempt to establish an ice market in the West Indies. In 1800, Thomas Swepson, Dr. Richard H. Bradford, and Dr. Robert H. Fisher built an ice house on the Nansemond, and

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[9] Ibid., pp. 75-78.

[10] Ibid., pp. 102-04.

[11] Ibid., pp. 75-78.

filled it with ice during the following winter. In 1801, this ice was shipped down the river to Norfolk, where it was met with acclaim. Someone suggested to them the idea of opening a business in the West Indies. Therefore the "Jamaica Ice Company" was formed, and Dr. Fisher went to Jamaica in August, 1801, to see what trade he could get there. However he met with a rather cool reception in Jamaica, with one person actually laughing in his face. Despite Dr. Fisher's utmost pleas, no one thought the enterprise was very good. They had no ice then, had had none in the past, and saw no need for any in the future. There also was an unusual lack of money in the West Indies at that time, and no one could afford the ice. Finally, after being in Jamaica for two months, Dr. Fisher set sail for Norfolk on December 26, 1801.[12] Thus was the end of the short-lived "Jamaica Ice Company" of Suffolk.

The oyster war. Although no figures are available on the extent of oystering in the Nansemond during this period, an incident that occurred in 1850 proves that there was some. On March 29 of that year, the "oyster war" started and ended. The sheriff of Nansemond County, Col. Hugh H. Kelly, led some citizens and the artillery company

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[12] Ibid., pp. 39-50

of Suffolk, Lieut. F. Riddick commanding, to the mouth of the Nansemond in the steamer "Sun" for the purpose of arresting those who were violating the laws of the Commonwealth in relation to oysters in Nansemond County. There were seventy-five men in all, and when they arrived at the "seat of war," they steamed into the middle of a whole fleet of vessels violating the law there. The signal to board was given, and in less than a half-hour, twelve vessels and seventy-five men were captured. All of this took place without the firing of a single gun. The vessels and prisoners were all taken to Suffolk. The Suffolk Intelligencer stated that it was "the greatest Naval victory on record!"[13]

The coming of the railroad. The year 1850 saw the opening of Suffolk's first railroad communication with the outside world. On the ninth of November, the Portsmouth and Suffolk section of the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad was completed.[14] This was the beginning of the end for business on the wharves of Suffolk.

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[13]"The Oyster War," The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Note Book, III (April, 1850), 117.

[14]Pollock, op. cit., p. 78.

II. STEAMSHIPS ON THE NANSEMOND

On May 24, 1815, an article appeared in a Norfolk newspaper announcing the arrival of the first steamboat to Norfolk harbor. "We have at length the satisfaction of seeing in our harbor, one of those valuable improvements in internal navigation, a STEAM BOAT."[15] Four years later, the steamboat had reached the Nansemond. What could have been the first steamboat on the Nansemond was advertised on July 5, 1819, as leaving for Suffolk on the next Saturday. The price was advertised as being two dollars, including dinner.[16] On July 27, 1819, the James River Steam Boat Company announced that they were starting a regular steamboat run to Smithfield and Suffolk. It was to leave once a week for Suffolk, with a fare of two dollars.[17] On May 15, 1822, the "Albermare" was put into regular service between Suffolk and Norfolk. She ran between the two cities every Monday and Wednesday, leaving Nivison's Wharf at nine in the morning, and returning the same day. The fare was two dollars, but those who returned to Norfolk the same day were only charged a dollar and a half each way.[18] The growing

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[15] John C. Emmerson, Jr. (compiler), The Steam-Boat Comes to Norfolk Harbor and the Log of the First Ten Years, 1815-1825; as reported by the Norfolk Gazette and The American Beacon and the Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald (Ann Arbor: Edward Brothers, Inc., 1949), p. 1.

[16] Ibid., p. 130.

[17] Ibid., p. 132.

[18] Ibid., p. 221

use of the steamboat on the Nansemond shows that it was much desired by the early 1820's.

The passengers seemed to have liked the trip to Suffolk, for in May, 1822, a passenger gave a very favorable description of a voyage up the river. He considered the ship good, and the scenery of the Nansemond excellent. He was very pleased with the town of Suffolk which "peeps thro' a glade and beckons you to come and share its hospitality." This writer also proposed that the steamer leave Norfolk at eight instead of nine in the morning, and from Suffolk at four, in order to have a period of about four hours in Suffolk.[19] Therefore the trip from Norfolk to Suffolk must have taken about four hours by steamboat.

Steamboats kept running on the Nansemond, at even more frequent intervals, until early in the 1900's, as will be seen in a following chapter.

III. THE WAR OF 1812

Not too much happened in and around the Nansemond during the War of 1812. The British never got any closer to Suffolk than Craney Island, where they were stopped by the Virginia militia.[20] Nevertheless, the people around the

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[19] Ibid. pp. 222-25.

[20] Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, p. 7.

Nansemond, especially in Suffolk, were very apprehensive lest the British should appear. The people of Suffolk feared that the British would again come and burn the town, as they had done in 1779. One night the alarm was given that the British were coming, and general consternation prevailed at once. Many of the townspeople were listening to an old itinerant preacher by the name of Gates, which quickly ended with the sound of the alarm. A short while later, it was discovered that the "British" were actually a few oyster boats bringing a load of oysters to a local restaurateur.[21]

However, a few incidents did occur on the Nansemond during the war. On March 18, 1813, a letter was sent from General Robert Taylor to the governor of Virginia informing him that on March 17, it was reported that the British had landed a strong force on the north side of the Nansemond at Barrot's Point. This party was supposed to be going toward Suffolk. Taylor went on to say that nothing else had been heard about it, but some men had been sent to investigate.[22] A Norfolk newspaper on March 20 reported that two British boats had landed on March 18 at the lower end of the

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[21] Pollock, op. cit., p. 34.

[22] H. W. Flournoy (ed.), Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts From January 1, 1808, to December 31, 1835; Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond (Richmond: James E. Goode, Printer, 1892), X, 204-05. Hereafter referred to as Calendar of Va. State Papers.

Nansemond, but had departed without molesting anything.[23] These two accounts probably refer to the same incident. On March 24, 1813, General Taylor wrote to the governor that a ship had supposedly been burned on the Nansemond that morning, and that a frigate was then stationed in the channel of the James and Nansemond. Both of these refer to British ships.[24]

Outside of these few small incidents, nothing else of importance happened on the Nansemond during this war. But that was not so in other wars.

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[23] John C. Emmerson, Jr. (Transcriber), War in the Lower Chesapeake and Hampton Roads Areas - 1812-1815; as reported in the Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger and the Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald (Richmond: typed copy found in the Virginia State Library, 1946), p. 56.

[24] Calendar of Va. State Papers, op. cit., p. 214.

CHAPTER IV

THE NANSEMOND IN TWO WARS

The Nansemond has seen much fighting on her waters and banks in the two great wars fought in the United States. Some have died on her, and others have sailed to their dooms from her. Still others lived through the fighting, and had fond memories of their time spent on the Nansemond.

I. THE REVOLUTION

General use. During the American Revolution, the Nansemond was in constant use as an artery of war. Suffolk became a storehouse for Virginia, and many stores were kept there to be shipped to the militia of Virginia. In May of 1779, there were nine thousand barrels of salt pork, eight thousand barrels of tar, pitch, and turpentine, along with much rum, brandy, and other valuable military stores lying in Suffolk awaiting shipment.[1] The Nansemond County Committee of Safety had an arsenal at "Sack Point" on the Nansemond. Both land and sea forces were supplied here, and it was fairly safe, since it could not be easily reached

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[1] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, special 200th anniversary edition, October 27, 1942, Sec. M, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as Anniversary Edition.

by the British.[2] The river was also used to hide ships, for several were sunk in the Nansemond to keep them out of British hands. Some of them were later raised and used to transport supplies to the army around Yorktown.[3] The schooner "Liberty," a Virginia ship which took part in more than twenty actions, was sunk in a deep hole in the Nansemond when Lord Cornwallis invaded lower Virginia. She was later raised and used as a transport at Yorktown.[4]

Fighting. Actual fighting that took place on the Nansemond during the Revolution was limited. On May 28, 1778, the "Revenge," Capt. Wright Westcott, was sunk in the Nansemond, with a loss of prisoners, including Lieut. Edward Morten, who died in prison.[5] Outside of this engagement, there is little record of other fighting.

The burning of Suffolk. On May 13, 1779, a British expedition came down the Nansemond, and burned the town of Suffolk. The brig "Mars," which was anchored there at the time, gave two cannons to be used in the defense of the

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[2] W. E. Mac Clenny, "The Part Taken by Nansemond County, Virginia in the American Revolution" (The Mac Clenny Papers, Manuscript Division, University of Virginia Library), p. 10.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

[4] "The Schooner Liberty," The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser, I (April, 1848), pp. 77-79.

[5] Robert Armistead Stewart, The History of Virginia's

town, but to no avail.[6] During the burning of the town, all the stores in the public warehouses by the wharves were destroyed. The tar, pitch, and turpentine were poured out and set on fire. They floated down the river, where marsh grass was ignited, and it was remarked that it gave the appearance of a "veritable river of fire for some distance."[7]

The "Dolphin." One of the ships built near Suffolk was the "Dolphin," commanded by John Cowper. This ship passed out of the river one day during the war, and attacked three British vessels. After a fierce struggle, the "Dolphin" was sunk, and the three British ships sailed away.[8] It is said that Cowper nailed the ship's Flag to the masthead, vowing never to take it down before the enemy.[9] Major D. B. Dunbar composed a poem in honor of the "Dolphin," two verses of which are printed here:

"The sun was rising in the east,
When pealed the cannon's roar.
The sun had sunk far in the west,
Ere the bloody fight was o'er;
When on the bosom of the deep,
The "Dolphin" rode no more.

Navy of the Revolution (Richmond: Mitchell and Hotchkiss, 1933), p. 53.

[6] Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, p. 1.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Stewart, op. cit., p. 72.

[9] Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, p. 1.

"And long the maids of Nansemond,
Watched by the lonely strand,
To welcome back the noble crew
That ne'er returned to land
Their flag unstruck floats o'er their tomb
On Ocean's yellow sand."[10]

The "Marquis La Fayette." The "Dolphin," however, wasn't the only ship to come from the Nansemond to serve her country. The "Marquis La Fayette" was built within a half-mile of Suffolk by Willis Cowper and Company. Her story is the most detailed of any ship that was built on the Nansemond.[11]

In the fall of 1780, the "Marquis" was ready to be launched, when suddenly the news came that a British fleet, under Major-General Leslie, had arrived in Hampton Roads. Immediately the British sent two detachments up the Nansemond, each landing on one of the banks, and intending to unite at Suffolk. The owners of the "Marquis" heard about this, and immediately scuttled and sank their ship in about eighteen feet of water. However, one of the detachments, upon reaching Suffolk, lifted the ship and took it to Portsmouth.

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[10] John H. Powell, "The Part Nansemond Played in the American Revolution" (unpublished paper in the possession of the author in Suffolk, Va.), p.16.

[11] John Cowper, "The Ship Marquis La Fayette," The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser, II (July, 1849), pp. 146-55. The entire story of the "Marquis" is taken from this source.

But her sails and riggings had been removed to a spot about seven miles from Suffolk. One of the detachments came to the place where they were stored, but did not open the house where they were being kept.

The British proposed to fit out the ship and send it to New York, but Leslie was ordered from Virginia, and the ship was sunk again at Gosport. The owners wasted no time in raising her, taking her back up the Nansemond, and preparing her for sea.

The ship was about ready to sail when the invasion of Virginia started permanently early in 1781. Since it was very dangerous to leave the "Marquis" in the narrow waters of the Nansemond, it was moved up near the much wider mouth. This brought the ship in full view of the British ships, but the river was very difficult to enter because of shoals near the mouth, and the British didn't have a pilot that could bring a ship large enough to challenge the "Marquis", with her twelve six-pounders, across the bars. Some small ships attempted to attack her one night, but were discovered. They beat a hasty retreat.

On the night of the second or third of May, the "Marquis" decided to break out of the Nansemond and sail for the open sea. There were already too many British ships in the Roads, and anymore would have made escape impossible. They planned to sail through the fleet in complete silence, in the hope that the British would think it one of her own.

She also hoped to get in among the British transports where the British frigates would not fire on her.

The night was not completely dark, for the moon was in its second quarter. The ship weighed anchor, cleared the river, and sailed into the Roads. Then suddenly the wind became lighter, and in a short time was calm. They could not go back because of the tide, so nothing remained but to drop anchor. If they had been found there in the moonlight, their fate would have been certain. But just as they were ready to drop anchor, the higher sails began to swell, the top-sails bent, and immediately spread themselves to the wind. A quick northwester had come on.

The "Marquis" now entered full into the Roads, and ship after ship was left behind. No one hailed them until they were almost clear. Suddenly a large frigate hailed them, but only once, and the "Marquis" sailed into the open sea. The ship had performed a remarkable feat, which was explained partly by the facts that the ship was very fast, and the British very lax.

The "Marquis" had an eventful career sailing up and down the Atlantic. She captured many prizes, and had many other narrow escapes. But such a gallant ship came to a very un-gallant end. She was being chased by a British frigate sometime later near Cape Henry, when suddenly another frigate appeared, which was shaping her course to cut the "Marquis" off from the Cape. Her original captain, Joseph Meredith,

had already left her, and the new captain was not made of the same material. He did not think the ship could escape, even though the Virginia officers assured she could without getting more than two broadsides, a thing she had suffered before. However, the captain did not listen, but ordered the helm to be put up, and the little ship, the best fighter to come from the Nansemond, was run ashore.

Normal life during the war. In spite of the fighting in and around the Nansemond, the people still led their normal lives. Many ships were built and sold during the war on the Nansemond. In January, 1777, the schooner "Betsy," built at Boston, and then lying off Pig's Point, was for sale.[12] In July, 1777, a vessel belonging to John Driver was for sale at Suffolk.[13] This was probably built on the Nansemond. On October 30, 1778, the brig "Magdalen", about eighty hogsheads burthen, was to be sold at Suffolk.[14] In June, 1779, a sloop, owned by John Driver, was for sale;[15] it was probably lying in the Nansemond at the time.

In the early days of the war, ships from the Nansemond were still sailing across the sea. For in January, 1776, the

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[12] Advertisement in the Virginia Gazette, January 10, 1777.

[13] Ibid., July 11, 1777.

[14] Ibid., October 16, 1778.

[15] Ibid., June 26, 1779.

ship "Rockingham" was lying in the Nansemond, and was asking for cargo and passengers for her trip to Glasgow in February.[16]

Plantations were also being sold during the war. In the fall of 1779, a plantation on the Nansemond was for sale, and one of her selling points was that the best oysters were taken in the Nansemond near the plantation.[17] Even in those early days, Nansemond River oysters were receiving favorable comment.

The people of Nansemond didn't like preaching very much in this period, which is shown by an incident in 1778. In November of that year, two Baptists, a minister and a layman, were preaching along the banks of the river. David Barrow, the minister, was the pastor of the Mill Swamp Baptist Church at that time, and a Mr. Mintz accompanied him. Apparently they said something someone didn't like, for a group tried to drown them out. Failing that, about twenty of the listeners captured Barrow and Mintz, carried them to the river, and ducked them. Barrow was the chief sufferer, as they thrust his face down into the mud of the river.[18] The Nansemond may be the only river in Virginia with the imprint of a Baptist minister's face in its mud, although it is probably not there

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[16] Ibid., January 6, 1776

[17] Ibid., November 20, 1779.

[18] Joseph B. Dunn, The History of Nansemond County, Virginia (Suffolk: N. P., 1907), p. 45.

at the present time.

But soon the war was over, and peace took hold of the land. Eighty years later, however, a large war stalked the land once more.

II. THE CIVIL WAR

Early defense. During the Civil War, there was much more general fighting in and around the Nansemond than in any previous war. On June 15, 1861, R. E. Lee wrote to Governor Letcher of Virginia, and reported on the state's preparation for defense. He reported that three batteries had been constructed on the Nansemond to prevent the ascent of the river and the occupation of the railroad from Suffolk to Norfolk. These batteries were to mount a total of nineteen guns.[19]

Military Campaigns around the Nansemond. The Union forces were in command of the region around the Nansemond the greater part of the war.[20] In May, 1862, the Confederates evacuated Suffolk, and the town was surrendered to Colonel Dodge of the New York Mounted Rifles. General Mansfield took charge for a while, and was replaced by General John J. Peck,

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[19] H. W. Flournoy (ed.), Calendar of Virginia State Papers and other Manuscripts from January 1, 1836, to April 15, 1869; Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond (Richmond: James E. Goode, Printer, 1893), XI, 170-72.

[20] Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, pp. 6-7. This short military history is taken entirely from this source.

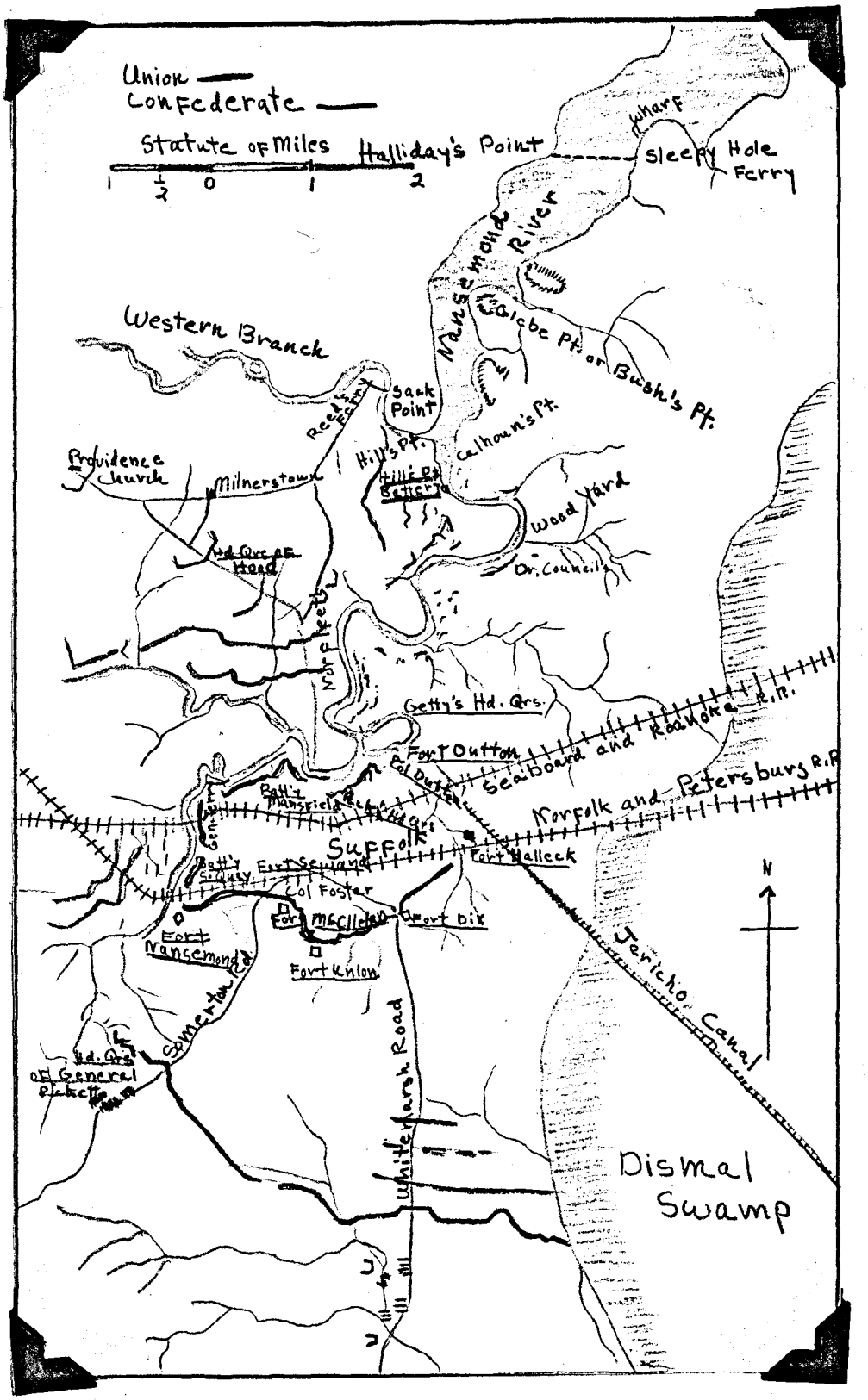

FIGURE 3

NANSEMOND RIVER AND VICINITY

NAVAL OPERATIONS IN AID OF

ARMY DEFENSE OF

SUFFOLK, VA.

who commanded alone for some time. In the spring of 1863, General George W. Getty took command of part of the troops around Suffolk. On April 11, 1863, General James Longstreet, C. S. A., led a large force against Suffolk and laid seige to it. This attempt failed to take the town, and there was no other concentrated effort against Suffolk for the remainder of the war. Shortly after the seige, which lasted about a month, the Federals evacuated Suffolk. Small battles occurred in the region throughout the remainder of the war, but none are worth mentioning.

Naval activity on the Nansemond. Our main concern here, however, is with the river, and, therefore, with naval activity on it. In conjunction with the army, the United States Navy had ships on the Nansemond. On November 1, 1862, Admiral Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, listed the position of all his vessels. On the Nansemond at that time were the "Commodore Barney," a ferryboat, and the "Stepping Stones," a light-draft vessel.[21]

When Longstreet moved to attack Suffolk, naval activity increased greatly. Lieut. R. H. Lamson, who commanded the

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[21] U. S. Navy Dept., Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), Series I, Vol VIII, 176-77. Hereafter referred to as Official Records.

flotilla off Suffolk, in a report to Lee on April 12, 1863, listed the "Mount Washington," "Cohasset," "Alert," "Stepping Stones," "Swan," and the "Barney" as being on the Nansemond at that time.[22]

On April 13, a ship of the Union was brought under fire for the first time by Longstreet's advancing forces.[23]

On April 14, the first heavy action between the navy and the Confederate forces occurred. That morning, the "Mount Washington" was fired upon just below Norfleet's Point, with one shot entering her boilers, and other shots raking her bows and decks. The "Washington" ran aground and had to be pulled off by the "Stepping Stones." The "Stones" towed the "Washington" down the river, until she was again grounded while crossing the bar near Western Branch. A lively engagement then ensued there. By 1:30 in the afternoon, the Confederate batteries had been silenced, and the sharp-shooters dislodged. But at three, the Confederates opened up from new positions, and the firing continued until six, when the "Washington" had been towed out of range by the "Stepping Stones." The "Stones" had received shots that cut up her decks and pilot house, and dismounted a gun. Lamson, in this report to Lee, also said that the "Washington" had been

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[22] Ibid. p. 716.

[23] Ibid. p. 718.

so completely riddled in her hull and machinery that he could not even make an estimate of her damages.[24]

During the battle that day, the "Stepping Stones" had two case of ammunition, about twenty or thirty shells, and fifty pounds of powder to blow up on her. The pilot was hit in the thigh by a fragment of shell, from w hich he later died. As he crept to the hatchway, a man named Smith slipped on the blood surrounding him and fell to the deck. As Smith got up, he wiped the blood from his clothes, and, "...looking very angrily at the dying man, said: 'Why in h--l don't you get into the sick bay; I came near breaking my d---d neck.'"[25]

According to Samuel J. Jones, the assistant surgeon, the casualties on board the "Minnesota," "Barney," "Mount Washington," and "Stepping Stones" on April 13 and 14 were five dead, fourteen wounded, and one missing.[26]

On the fifteenth of April, the "Barney" was run aground near Hill's Point, and the "Stepping Stones" had to pull her off under heavy rifle fire. Lamson said that it was the hottest rifle fire that they had ever been under.[27] Still,

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[24] Ibid. pp. 722-25.

[25] Frank B. Butts, Reminiscences of Gunboat Service on the Nansemond (in Personal Narratives of Events in the War of the Rebellion, being papers read before the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society, 3rd Series, No. 8. Providence: Providence Press Company, 1884), pp. 34-35.

[26] Official Records, op. cit., p. 725.

[27] Ibid. p. 727.

it appeared that no rebels had crossed the river to the Suffolk side.[28]

On the same day, Peck wrote to Lee asking for more boats to protect the river. He was very apprehensive, and feared a crossing on the upper Nansemond that night.[29] On the seventeenth, four boats, which Lee had ordered to the Nansemond, arrived. These were the "Coeur de Lion," "Teaser," "Primrose," and the "Yankee." The latter two were too large to go beyond the Western Branch, whereas the first two could.[30]

On the day of arrival, the "Coeur de Lion" ran into heavy fire from Hill's Point, for she had to help pull the "Teaser" from a bar there.[31]

On April 19, one of the most important battles of the campaign occurred--the capture of the Hill's Point Battery by General Getty and Lieut Lamson. They captured five pieces of artillery and 161 prisoners.[32] This battery, located at the junction of Western Branch and the Nansemond, had been a constant thorn in the side of the ships on the river, and greater notice should be taken of its capture.

The soldiers of Getty were concealed on the "Stepping Stones" as she started by the battery in her usual manner. Suddenly, she quickly ran into the bank, and the concealed

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[28] Ibid. [29] Ibid., p. 728 [30] Ibid., p. 731.

[31] Ibid., pp. 735-36.

[32] Ibid., pp. 742-43.

soldiers poured onto the shore. The rebels could not bring their guns to bear on the ship, and the two lines of Confederates were overthrown with considerable ease.[33] The Confederates attributed the easy capture of the battery to an extreme absence of vigilance on the part of the men in the battery.[34]

On April 20, the Hill's Point Battery was abandoned by the Union forces.[35] They were simply handing back to the Confederates a very valuable piece of property. Lee told Peck that this was a very bad mistake, and that he would have no part of it.[36] It had resulted from a mix-up between Lee and Peck.

On April 23, the "Stepping Stones," "Zouave," and "Cordelin"[37] were attempting to pass the Confederate battery at Western Branch (Hill's Point), when fire from the battery made the stearing-gear of the "Zouave" unmanageable, and she ran on some piles which were obstructing the channel. Under prolonged fire from the Confederates, the other ships finally got her loose. It was reaching darkness at the time, for Butts speaks of the "summers' night battle." It seemed to him that

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[33] Ibid., p. 747. [34] Ibid., p. 797. [35] Ibid., p. 755.

[36] Ibid., pp. 756-57.

[37] Butts, op. cit., p. 48. The "Cordelin" referred to here is certainly the "Coeur de Lion," there being no record of a "Cordelin" in existence. Butts makes several errors, even more serious than this one, in his account of his days on

he was right in the middle of a fireworks show.[38]

A man, about a mile from the battle, describes the scene in flowing words:

> This engagement was a most sublime tableau in the drama of this great rebellion. The little fleet of gunboats, scarcely discernible in a deep twilight, passed and repassed upon the calm water as if they were visionary actors performing their parts. The sudden flash and loud report of their cannon, the ascending shells, with sparks from their burning fuses marking their flight, as metors imprint the passage of falling stars, the explosion of shell far above the earth, illuminated the scene with flashes of golden light, while the booming cannon, the sharp report, and flash of the rifle, the loud hurrahs of our own men, and the clang of the rebel yell, all blended with this most terrifying, yet beautiful scene.[39]

On April 26, a report from W. M. Wood, fleet surgeon, showed that up to that date nine men had been killed and sixteen wounded on the Nansemond. The "Commodore Barney" had not yet given her official return, however.[40]

By the last of April, the action around Suffolk had almost died out. On May 1, the "Yankee" and "Primose" were ordered by Lee out of the Nansemond.[41] On the fourth, the "Coeur de Lion" and "Teaser" followed suit.[42] On May 3, the army moved out in three columns against the Confederates, with the navy assisting as much as they could. This

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the "Stepping Stones." For this reason, I am using him sparingly, mainly to add some color to the story.

[38] Ibid., pp. 48-49. [39] Ibid., p. 50.

[40] Official Records, op. cit., p. 779.

[41] Ibid., p. 783. [42] Ibid., p. 787.

consisted mainly in carrying troops across the river.[43] On May 5, Lamson was ordered to report to Lee for further duty. The rebels had withdrawn from Suffolk by that time. Only the "Stepping Stones" was to be left on the river to carry on her normal functions. Lieut. Lamson and Lieut. Cushing were both praised highly for their actions during the campaign.[44]

There were twelve ships that fought on the Nansemond in this campaign. On the Upper Nansemond, under Lieut. R. H. Lamson, were the "Stepping Stones," "Mount Washington," "Coeur de Lion," "Cohasset," "Zouave," "Alert," and the two army gun boats, "West End" and "Smith Briggs," which did not belong to Lee's squadron. On the Lower Nansemond, under Lieut. William B. Cushing, were the "Commodore Barney," "Yankee," "Teaser," and "Primrose."[45] All of these ships were fourth class vessels and none were very big. They ranged in size from the 513 ton "Barney," a side-wheel steamer, to the sixty-five ton "Alert," a screw steamer. All of the ships were either side-wheel steamers or screw steamers.[46]

After Longstreet left Suffolk, the "Stepping Stones" was able to take stock of herself. Butts says that she had

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[43] Ibid., p. 786. [44] Ibid., p. 790.

[45] Ibid., p. 775.

[46] Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii. This does not include the two army gun boats.

lost all her bulwarks, and had had her upper deck blown off; two of the guns had been dismounted, and the only anchor was a heavy iron kettle taken from a rebel salt works. The woodwork on the sides of the ship looked like an old target, and the old smoke stack was so riddled that it was said that Lee exclaimed that the funnel looked like a nutmeg grater.[47] After the war one man told Butts that the last he had seen of the "Stones," she had been towed from the Nansemond with nothing left of her but the hull.[48]

Very little happened on the Nansemond after Longstreet's attack. There was the usual patrolling action that kept up all through the war. The "General Putnam" was on patrol duty from December 2 to December 15, 1863, and saw some fighting. She captured a Confederate mail-boat on the second, drove off some rebel snipers on the fourth, and drove off about twenty cavalry near the Western Branch on the eleventh.[49]

On March 5, 1864, there came a communication to Lee from Major-General Butler saying that Suffolk was going to be attacked by a force of Confederates. The "Stepping Stones" was dispatched down the Nansemond at once, and the "Barney" was ordered to assist. The "Stones" went up the

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[47] Butts, op. cit., p. 66.

[48] Ibid., p. 67.

[49] Official Records, op. cit., IX, 339-40; 351-52.

Nansemond on the sixth, but was told that the rebels, some seven or eight thousand, had already left.[50] Therefore, the "Stones" was ordered to leave on the seventh, and the "Barney" was ordered to stay where she was as a guard on the Lower Nansemond.[51]

Throughout the ramainder of the war, there were other small incidents too numerous to mention. There were small bands of rebels in the area, but no large force. The river was used to ferry contraband trade and information to the rebels. Commander Guest of the "Iosco" thought that the oyster-men on the river were doing a lot of this, which they probably were. This was in December, 1864.[52]

On April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered at Appomattox, and the long conflict was over. The people of the South had to turn their attention to thoughts of peace, and what they were going to do with their wrecked country.

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[50] Ibid., pp. 531-32.

[51] Ibid., p. 538.

[52] Ibid., XI, 18.

CHAPTER V

THE MODERN ERA

I. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Lumber. After the Civil War, peacetime traffic once again started flowing down the river. Perhaps the greatest user of the river, at least until the early twentieth century, was the lumber business. The Jackson brothers opened up a lumber business in Whaleyville, Virginia, in 1874, from whence a railroad was built in 1876 to haul the lumber to the Nansemond River at Suffolk for shipping.[1] The Gay Lumber Manufacturing Company was re-organized in 1884 under W. N. Camp as president. The offices of the company were at the Suffolk mill on the north side of the Nansemond. It occupied about five acres and had an extended river-front, with deep water, and ample wharfage accommodation for its large business, which in 1886 was about thirty thousand feet of lumber daily.[2] In Pollock's book there is a picture of the Gay Company's lumber mill in Suffolk, and three large three-masted ships can be seen at the wharf, besides large

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[1] W. E. Mac Clenny, "An Outline History of Nansemond County, Virginia," p. 27. Photostatic copy belonging to John H. Powell of Suffolk, Virginia.

[2] Edward Pollock, Sketch Book of Suffolk, Va.; Its People and Its Trade (Portsmouth: Fiske and Purdie, 1886), p. 105.

piles of board on shore. This is a good indication of the business being carried on at that time.

The Suffolk and Carolina Railroad Company owes its founding to the lumber business of the Nansemond. It was built to connect the Nansemond at Suffolk with the Chowan River and the Albermarle Sound. Lumber mills were constructed along the line, and lumbermen found the railroad to be of great advantage.[3] Another picture in Pollock's book shows the river front property of the railroad company, and two three-masted and one two-masted ship are tied up at the dock. Other pictures throughout Pollock's book attest to the great lumber trade on the Nansemond in the late nineteenth century.

One old Suffolk man, Alfred B. Cramner, relates that around the turn of the century he once counted sixteen vessels loading and waiting to be loaded with lumber at one time. He also relates that he engaged in the business himself and owned several ships, mostly about two hundred feet long, with eighty-five foot masts, which carried from 550 to 650 tons.[4] These schooners that came up the Nansemond had to be pulled by tugs part of the way, for the twists and turns of

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[3] Ibid., pp. 91-92.

[4] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, Mid-Century Edition, Sec. 1, p. 10. Hereafter referred to as Mid-Century Edition.

the river at certain places would not permit the use of sails.[5]

Gradually, however, the lumber business dropped off. Mills for making finished lumber products moved into the south from the north, and it became more practical to move the lumber by rail. Also several Suffolk sawmills either closed down or moved to another location during the Depression.[6] The loss of the lumber trade dealt a death blow to business on the Nansemond, especially at the Suffolk wharves. But the lumber business did not die out entirely, for as recently as 1950 the sailing ram "Jennie Bell" was hauling lumber from Suffolk to Baltimore.[7]

Oysters. Lumber was not the only business on the Nansemond in the late nineteenth century, for the oyster packing business was thriving by the 1880's. The business was started before the Civil War, but the war crushed it immediately. Mr. H. D. Cooper restored the business shortly after the war, and in 1869, a second establishment was founded. At first most of the trade was the "bucket" type, where the oysters were opened and shipped in pails holding

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Letter from John L. Lockhead, Librarian, The Mariners Museum, to the author, December 9, 1958.

from two to ten gallons. Then the "barrel trade" came into business, and large quantities of oysters were shipped in their shells to markets. The trade in 1886 amounted to about seventy-five thousand bushels a year, with two houses shipping about sixty-five thousand bushels of the total. The "barrel trade" went mostly to the northern markets such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, whereas the "bucket trade" went mainly to the south and west. As an oyster-depot, Suffolk had an advantage over other parts of Virginia in that oysters could be procured from the Nansemond beds during the stormy seasons when Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay would be hardly navigable to small craft. In 1886, the oyster packing trade of Suffolk employed a capital of about fifty thousand dollars.[8]

The oyster business, like the lumber business, also dropped off in the twentieth century. However, as late as 1934, 268 tons of seed oysters were shipped on the Nansemond.[9] Today there is no recorded oyster shipping on the Nansemond.

Other business. There were other businesses that used the Nansemond in the late nineteenth century. Jones

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[8] Pollock, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

[9] Department of the Army, Report Upon the Improvement of Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk, Va., District, being an extract from the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1935 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936) p. 420. Hereafter referred to as Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1935.

and Brothers, who were the Suffolk agents for the Old Dominion Steamship Company, had a business of their own in Suffolk in 1886. They were wholesale and retail dealers in hay, grain, coal, and ice.[10] A picture in Pollock's book shows their wharf and two buildings. Four three-masted ships, one two-masted ship, and a steamship can be seen around the wharf and on the river.

Before an artificial ice factory was built in 1891 at Suffolk, ice had to be brought from Maine and stored in the ice warehouses near the wharf. Lilly Lake ice was considered one of the best in that time.[11]

Tonnage. In actual tonnage, freight on the Nansemond has increased since 1890, while the value of the material has decreased. In 1890, the commerce of the stream amounted to over two hundred thousand tons. By 1895, it had dwindled to sixty thousand tons, and to less than seventeen thousand in 1900.[12] In 1908, the tonnage was reported as being 59,179 tons, valued at $3,487,375. The bulk of the tonnage was lumber, while the value was made up of high-class

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[10] Pollock, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

[11] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, special 200th anniversary edition, October 27, 1942, Sec. D., p. 4. Hereafter referred to as Anniversary Edition.

[12] United States Congress, Letter From the Secretary of War Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., House of Representatives Document No. 1246, 62d Congress, 3d session, p. 4. Hereafter referred to as House Document 1246.

merchandise and truck shipments.[13] In 1931, the tonnage was 401,124 tons, with a value of $481,687.[14] In 1955, 434,315 tons were shipped on the Nansemond. The value was probably about the same as in 1931, for the tonnage was nearly the same, and the materials shipped, mainly clays and earths, were also nearly the same.[15]

In the intervening years, there have been many ups and downs in commerce. There was an average tonnage of 54,554 tons annually between 1899-1909, with the low being in 1900. The bulk of the trade in this period consisted of agricultural products, lumber, and general merchandise.[16]

Between 1920 and 1925, the highest tonnage was in 1923 when 81,345 tons, valued at $998,482, was shipped on the river. Of this amount, 33,319 tons were wood and paper, with a value of $418,620, which was by far the most valuable class of commodities.[17]

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[13] United States Congress, Letter From the Secretary of War Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., House of Representatives Document No. 395, 61st Congress, 2d session, p. 3. Hereafter referred to as House Document 395.

[14] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1935, op. cit., p. 420.

[15] Department of the Army, Waterborne Commerce of the United States: Calendar Year 1955; Part 1, Waterways and Harbors, Atlantic Coast (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), p. 307. Hereafter referred to as Waterborne Commerce of the U. S., 1955. All tonnage in this paper is given in short tons.

[16] House Document 395, op. cit., p.3.

[17] United States Congress, Letter from the Secretary

In 1926, the tonnage amounted to 280,347 tons, valued at $539,321.[18] This is a great increase in tonnage over 1923, but a heavy decrease in value. The great increase in tonnage resulted from shipments of marl to Norfolk for the Virginia Portland Cement Corporation, which began operations in 1925. There was also an increase in fertilizer and decreases in lumber and brick. There were only 7,391 tons of wood and paper shipped in 1926, valued at $88,686.[19] This accounts for the decrease in value a great deal. Marl, though quite heavy, is not worth very much either.

From 1926-1934, the highest tonnage was in 1931 and the lowest was in 1932. There was an average tonnage of 272,008 tons annually.[20]

From 1946 to 1955, there was a high of 450,782 tons in 1953, and a low of 308,333 tons in 1947. There was an average tonnage of 418,210 tons annually.[21]

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of War Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., House of Representatives Document No. 184, 70th Congress, 1st Session, p. 10. Hereafter referred to as House Document 184.

[18] Ibid., p. 14.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1935, op. cit., p. 420. Average tonnage for the period computed by author.

[21] Waterborne Commerce of the U. S., 1955, op. cit., p. 307. Average tonnage for the decade computed by author.

There were 434,315 tons shipped on the Nansemond in 1955, of which 405,679 tons were clays and earths, in which category marl falls. The other materials shipped, both up and down, were motor fuel, gasoline, gas oil, distillate fuel oil, kerosene, sand, gravel, and crushed rock. Most of the shipping was done on non self-propelled dry cargo vessels, with 1078 upbound trips and 1076 downbound trips made on this type vessel during the year. To pull these non self-propelled vessels, there were 138 upbound and 137 downbound trips made by self-propelled towboats or tugboats. There were also twelve self-propelled tanker trips, both upbound and downbound.[22]

Commerce on the branches. Although the tonnage given above that traveled on the Nansemond also included the branches, a closer look can be given to them. In 1909, the commerce on Bennetts Creek was about nine hundred tons, valued at $137,000. There were 122,000 packages of truck, valued at $125,000, and the rest was made up of 345 tons of commercial fertilizer and 526 tons of manure.[23] This tonnage did not increase in the following years.

In the 1920's, there were about forty thousand tons shipped annually on the Western Branch.[24] The Nansemond

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[22] Ibid., pp. 307-08

[23] House Document 395, op. cit., p6.

[24] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 4.

Brick Corporation shipped an average of thirty thousand tons of brick annually, and received about six thousand tons of coal.[25] As has already been stated, there is no longer any industrial activity on the Western Branch.[26]

II. STEAMSHIPS ON THE NANSEMOND

In 1886, there were two steamship lines which ran on the Nansemond. The Old Dominion Steamship Company ran three steamers daily, except Sunday, between Norfolk, the Nansemond River and Suffolk, and several other points.[27] The Nansemond River Line had one steamer which left Norfolk every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at eleven in the morning for Suffolk, and returned every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, leaving at ten in the morning.[28]

In 1899, the Old Dominion Company ran a steamer daily, except Sunday, between Suffolk and Norfolk. It left Suffolk at eight in the morning, stopped at eight places along the river, and arrived at Norfolk at twelve-thirty. It would start on its return trip to Suffolk at three in the afternoon. The price of a trip from Norfolk to Suffolk was fifty cents, and seventy-five cents a round trip.[29]

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[25] Ibid., p. 11.

[26] Supra., p. 8.

[27] Pollock, op. cit., p. 16.

[28] Ibid., p. 64.

[29] The Pilot, IX (November, 1899), pp. 6-7. Issued monthly by the Old Dominion Steamship Co.

There were also excursion steamers that carried hundreds of people to Ocean View and other places on weekends. A Suffolk dentist related how everyone on these excursion trips was fine until the ship pulled into the slightly rougher waters of the James. "Then the landlubbers would develop rubber legs and head for the railings." This would happen every time.[30]

But like all of the old ways, the steamship had to go too. With the decline of the lumber business, and the rise of the auto, the steamship on the Nansemond went "the way of all flesh." In 1910, only one steamer was running regularly on the Nansemond, and it ran only once a week.[31] By 1928, there were no regular steamship lines operating on the Nansemond.[32]

III. THE BRIDGE AT SUFFOLK

There was no bridge across the Nansemond at Suffolk until shortly before the Civil War. Crossing was still made by the ferry at Jordan's Point. A bridge was built just before the war about 150 feet west of the present bridge, and was a drawbridge. The Federal troops burned this during

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[30] Article in the Mid-Century Edition, op. cit., Sec. 1, p. 1.

[31] House of Representatives, United States Congress, Letter from the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, Concerning the Nansemond River, Va., Committee on Rivers and Harbors Document No. 52, 61st Congress, 3d Session, p. 3.

[32] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 11.

the occupation of Suffolk, and a ferry and a pontoon bridge was used until 1881, when another bridge was completed. The present drawbridge, at the foot of North Main Street, was constructed in 1935, and the 1881 bridge was completely scrapped.[33]

IV. THE "CHARLES B. LEET"

The "Charles B. Leet" was one of the ships built on the Nansemond near Suffolk in the late nineteenth century. Its interesting story shows what a small world this is. The ship was engaged in the coast-wise trade for several years, and was abandoned by its crew one day in a storm. She apparently drifted into the Sargarso Sea, where she was recovered by a Spanish navigator and taken to a Spanish port. She was recognized by a Suffolk soldier in World War I, who was taken aboard and shown the Customs House markings which were put there when she was launched on September 10, 1892.[34]

V. GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITY ON THE NANSEMOND

Congress first ordered a survey of the Nansemond River in 1871. The report of this survey recommended that a channel be dredged eight feet deep and one hundred feet wide on the

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[33] Article in the Mid-Century Edition, op. cit., Sec. 1, p. 1.

[34] Article in the Anniversary Edition, op. cit., Sec. D, p. 1.

Suffolk bar and on the Western Branch bar. It also recommended minor fixtures, such as removing wrecks, at a total cost of thirty thousand dollars.[35] On August 11, 1888, Congress authorized a channel twelve feet deep and two hundred to four hundred feet wide from Town Point to Western Branch, and a channel twelve feet deep and one hundred feet wide from the Branch to Suffolk, with a turning basin two hundred feet square at Suffolk. Spur dikes and training walls were to be constructed at the mouth of Western Branch also.[36]

In 1909, there was an attempt made to get a channel twenty-five feet deep from the mouth of the river to Suffolk. This did not meet with any favorable comments, and Congress did not pass it. Again in 1910, there was an attempt to get a channel with a depth of fourteen feet. This also fared poorly.[37]

By an act of July 3, 1930, the project of 1888 was modified so as to provide for a channel twelve feet deep and one hundred feet wide from the mouth to the head of navigation, 0.45 mile above the highway bridge at Suffolk, with a

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[35] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 6.

[36] Department of the Army, Report Upon the Improvement of Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk, Va., District, being an extract from the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1952 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 434. Hereafter referred to as Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952.

[37] House Document 184, op. cit., p. 7.

turning basin two hundred feet square at Suffolk. Also a channel was to be dredged in Western Branch ten feet deep and eighty feet wide from its mouth to Reids Ferry. This work was completed in February of 1932. The total cost of the project, new work and maintenance, to June 30, 1952, was $352,399.91, and the total expenditure was $343,421.99.[38]

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[38] Rivers and Harbors in the Norfolk District, 1952, op. cit., pp. 434-35.

CHAPTER VI

THE NANSEMOND TODAY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. TODAY

The Nansemond River is still used a great deal today as has been shown. But, there is history being made on the river at the moment this paper is being written.

Above the bridge at Suffolk, a dam is being built to create an artificial lake which will be called Lake Meade. The area of the new lake will be about 511 acres. The dam, began in August, 1958, is expected to be finished in August of this year. It will stretch about 677 feet across the river, and will have a spill-way level of twelve feet above zero or low-tide level. The lake will be of fresh water, unlike the briny water of the Nansemond. This lake will be used to provide water for the Suffolk region.[1]

The river is used extensively today by boating enthusiasts. Because of this, a new marina is being built just downstream from the bridge at Suffolk, right on the edge of the city. This is being constructed by Fletcher Parr, a Suffolk boat dealer, and will be the second marina on the Nansemond. The other is near the home of Paul K. Brady on the Nansemond three miles below Suffolk. Owned by Brady, it has been in operation for several years. The new marina

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[1] Article in the Suffolk News-Herald, January 4, 1959. See also the April 13, 1959, issue of the same paper.

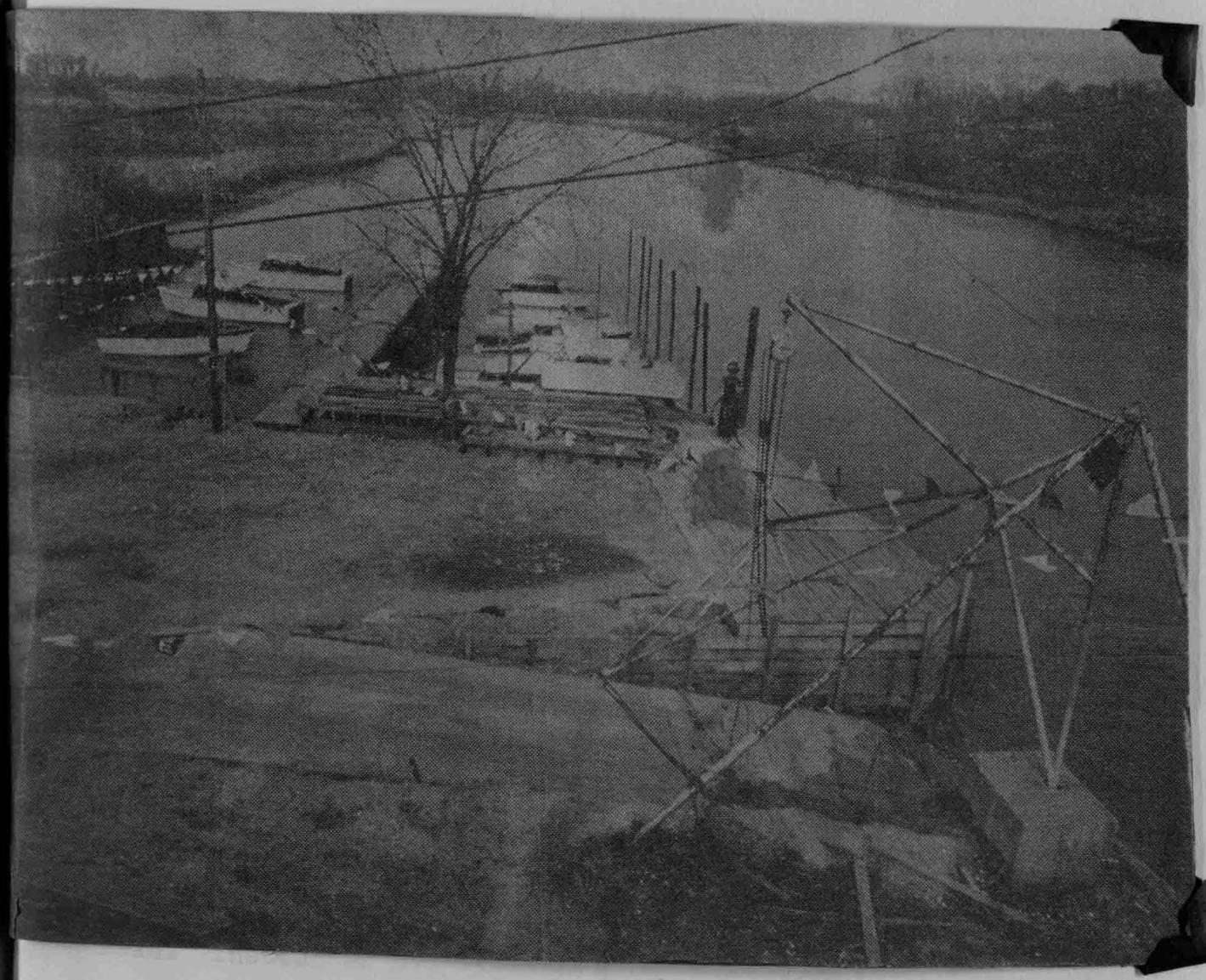

FIGURE 4

THE NANSEMOND AT SUFFOLK:

A RECENT VIEW

will accommodate thirty boats, and should be finished in the near future.[2]

In the planning stage is another business to be built on the Nansemond about three miles east of Suffolk. The site is owned by Lexsuco, Inc., of Solon, Ohio. An experimental plant is planned there for making a new type of building panel. The raw material for this plant will be something that hasn't been used much since the days of the Indians-reeds from the river bank.[3]

II. CONCLUSIONS

The Nansemond has seen much since John Smith sailed up it in 1608. The Indians have now gone from its banks; tobacco is no longer shipped from its many little towns; many men have fought and died on its waters; the lumber trade began, rose, and has all but disappeared; and ferries no longer ply their way through its smooth waters. But the waters have seen some busy and exciting days. The river has served, and served well, as a valuable artery of commerce for its surrounding area and further. However, it is not dead. Instead of sailing ships, barges come up and go down every day. Marl, gasoline, sand, and other materials are carried today instead of tobacco, lumber, and oysters. It is not the exciting river that it used to be, but it is still

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[2] Ibid., April 15, 1959. [3] Ibid., April 14, 1959.

used to quite an extent. And perhaps today it is headed for a greater era than ever before in its history.

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